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HEARTS TO MEND

A FANTASY IN ONE ACT

By HARRY A. OVERSTREET



STEWART KIDD
• MODERN PLAYS •
EDITED BY FRANK SHAY



TO BE PUBLISHED SHORTLY

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PUBLISHERS :-: CINCINNATI, U. S. A.

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Edited by Frank Shay

HEARTS TO MEND

Stewart Kidd Modern Plays

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HEARTS TO MEND

A FANTASY IN ONE ACT

By
HARRY AN OVERSTREET

HEARTS TO MEND was first produced by the FIRE-SIDE PLAYERS, White Plains, N. Y., in April, 1919, with the following cast:

PIERROT,	- - - - -	<i>James H. Wallace</i>
PIERRETTE,	- - - - -	<i>Millicent Ives</i>
TINS-TO-MEND MAN,	- - - - -	<i>G. W. Michelbacker</i>



CINCINNATI
STEWART & KIDD COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

PS 3529
V4H4
1920

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NOV 20 1920

no 1

CMS 2 Nov. 1920

HEARTS TO MEND

The Scene is the living room, dining room and kitchen—all in one—of Pierrot and Pierrette. It has the diminutive look of a toy house, and the immaculate spick-and-spanness. There are copper kettles and pots on shelves and blue and white plates and cups and saucers. There is a crib in the corner, left, with a screen that can be drawn about it. A table is at the right, front, by the side of which sits Pierrot, head in hands, elbows on knees, very gloomy. A door, left, leads to an inner room; a door, right, to the street.

HEARTS TO MEND

(Pierrette is heard singing a lullaby in the next room.)

Old Mister Moon is sinking to rest—
Sleep, kittikins, sleep!
The whispery winds have died in the west—
Sleep—kittikins—sleep!

(She comes in, holding a babe in her arms; sings—very softly.)

Up in the sky are the firefly stars—
Sleep, kittikins, sleep!
Father will catch them in crystal jars—
Sleep—kittikins—sleep!

(She lays the babe in its crib, the while softly humming the tune. Then she draws the screen about the bed. Meantime she casts anxious glances at the moody Pierrot. The babe asleep, she runs to Pierrot, kneeling at his side.)

PIERRETTE

Tired, sweetheart?

PIERROT *(indifferently)*

Oh—I guess so.

PIERRETTE

And famished, isn't that it?

Kettle not boiling,
And table unset;
And hungry man waiting
For slow Pierrette!

HEARTS TO MEND

It'll all be on the table, dear, in just the littlest minute.

PIERROT

Oh, it's not supper.

PIERRETTE

Not supper?

PIERROT

No.

PIERRETTE (*solicitously*)

You haven't caught cold, Pierrot? You know I told you to wear your woolen muffler and put on your rain shoes. For a man of your superior intelligence, you are *so* careless!

PIERROT

(*getting up with irritation and walking away*)

Oh, let me alone, Pierrette! You wouldn't understand. Get some supper for yourself. I don't want any.

(*She looks at him troubled for a moment. Then she runs to him, puts her hands on his breast.*)

PIERRETTE

Pierrot.

PIERROT

Well?

PIERRETTE

(*pointing an accusing finger at him slowly*)

You — haven't — been — to — see — your — bank — account — again?

(*Pierrot shakes his head gloomily.*)

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERRETTE

Oh yes you have! Don't deny it! And worrying yourself to death about expenses. But Pierrot—things aren't nearly as bad as you think they are. I'm doing all my own work—even the washing and the ironing—and Pierrot!—I've got a scheme! We'll take a boarder!

PIERROT (*disgusted*)

Boarder! Ugh!

PIERRETTE

Why not, sweetheart? Of course, we'd have to talk to him at mealtimes, I suppose. And you couldn't kiss me across the table as you used to. . . . (*Suddenly, with a catch*) Do you know, Pierrot, you haven't kissed me across the table for—oh—ever so long!

PIERROT (*struggling with himself*)

Pierrette . . .

PIERRETTE

Yes, dear.

PIERROT (*trying to get it out—then in despair*)

Oh, what's the use. I can't tell it to you.

PIERRETTE (*troubled*)

Why, what is it, Pierrot? You've lost something?

PIERROT (*quickly*)

Yes—that's it. I've lost something—the only thing I had, Pierrette—my song!

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERRETTE

Ah, the silly people didn't laugh to-day—that's it?

Silly, silly people,
Staring at a steeple;—

And you're all in the dumps, Pierrot? Isn't that the trouble?

PIERROT

They didn't laugh to-day, Pierrette; and they didn't laugh yesterday. They haven't laughed for a long time—not as they used to. (*Most gloomily*) And three of my songs have come back from the editors!

PIERRETTE (*defending him*)

But who cares for editors, Pierrot? They're such stupid creatures! Some day you'll write a great song that everybody'll love; and then you'll see all the foolish little editors bringing you velvets and gold.

PIERROT (*in gloom*)

No. The editors are right. The people are right. Something's gone out of me. I'm not the same as I was before—before—How long have we been married, Pierrette?

PIERRETTE

Just three tiny years!

PIERROT (*sighing*)

Only three years! (*Then bitterly—to Pierrette*) Here!—I'll give you a sign. Look! (*He walks with flat, listless feet up and down*)

HEARTS TO MEND

the room; then speaks, with a hopeless sob in his voice) I no longer walk on my toes! See! Flat—like that! No songs ever walked that way! Songs? No—here's the way—

(He rises momentarily to his toes and sings.)

Oh, a merry, merry fellow,
And a sweet, fair maid,
Danced on the meadow in the gypsy time—
Said the merry, merry fellow
To the sweet, fair maid—

(He breaks off.)

PIERROT *(hopeless)*

No—I can't do it. It's gone out of me *(Desperately)* Pierrette—I've come to a conclusion. I ought never to have married!

PIERRETTE *(suddenly stabbed)*

Oh, Pierrot, it's been the most beautiful thing in all the world!

PIERROT

That's because you're a woman, Pierrette, and not an artist.

PIERRETTE

But *you* said it was the most beautiful thing in all the world, Pierrot.

PIERROT *(vaguely)*

Did I? That was long ago. You don't understand, Pierrette. Women never do. Life to them is a little cage in which they sit all day

HEARTS TO MEND

long and sing tiny songs about tea and muffins. Men are different. Put them in a cage and they sing for a day. Then they begin to droop.

PIERRETTE (*hurt*)

So you want to go away, Pierrot?

PIERROT (*passionately*)

I want to capture it again—the power, the thrill, the fire of song!

PIERRETTE

And you would capture it if—if I—(*looking toward the screen which hides the crib*) if we—were not here?

PIERROT (*flinging out his arms in despair*)

Oh, I'm a brute, Pierrette! I don't know. I'm gone stale—that's the trouble. I'm done for—all these worries and things. I'll sit at home, I guess, and darn socks!

(*He flings himself into his chair. Pierrette moves quietly about, putting his tea on the table. She sets tea only for one.*)

PIERRETTE (*handing him his cup*)

There, sweetheart. Your tea.

PIERROT (*stirring himself*)

Aren't you going to have some, too?

PIERRETTE (*controlling her voice and with her back half turned to him as she goes to the other room*)

HEARTS TO MEND

Oh no, dear; I've had lots of tea this afternoon. I'm not hungry. Besides, I'm late with the cleaning up. I'll be gone only a minute.

(She goes out quickly. Pierrot makes to rise and follow her; then, with a hopeless wave of the hand, sinks back into the chair. He drinks his tea moodily. There is a voice outside)—

"Tins to mend! Tins to mend!"

(A knock at the door and the Tins-to-mend man enters.)

MAN *(taking off his cap, half humorously, half apologetically)*

Any tins to mend, sir?

PIERROT *(grimly)*

Nothing as easy as that in this house. It's hearts to mend here!

MAN *(slinging off his pack)* Hearts to mend?—oho—I do that, too! Truth is *(confidentially)*, it's come to be my main business. For if you'd believe it, there's more hearts to mend and souls to mend than pots and kettles to mend in this old world of ours. Fact, my dear sir, fact! *(Sits down)* And you can't throw hearts away when they begin to show wear—now can you?—like you throw away an old pot? No siree! *(Impressively)* You got to mend 'em. And there's tricks about mendin' them, sir—tricks in all trades, say I. You can mend 'em so's they's worse'n they was in the beginning. And you can mend 'em so careful and

HEARTS TO MEND

so clever, you can't tell they was ever mended at all. In fact, I've mended some of them so they was better that way than they was in the beginning. Seems curious, but it's true. If there was a kettle now you wanted me to work on while I was talkin', it'd keep me busy.

(Pierrot looks about; gets up and tosses him a kettle.)

PIERROT

There! Bang away at that!

(He sits down again. The Tins-to-mend man hammers away for awhile, Pierrot watching him gloomily.)

MAN

You see—pots and kettles is curious things. Y' can't just let 'em set there and be. They rust. That's what they do. Y' got t' keep shinin' 'em—keep polishin' 'em up. And they like it, sir—oh, they do! They kinda get a hold on life. And when they hang in your kitchen all bright and happy like, they just seem to sing away like birds. Now you're a singer, sir—why don't you make a song about that?

PIERROT

I can't sing any more.

MAN

Lost your voice, sir?

PIERROT

No—worse than that—I'm married!

HEARTS TO MEND

MAN (*solicitously*)

That's bad, sir; that's bad—if you're not married right. They take it out of a man, them wicked ones!

PIERROT (*firing up*)

Who said she was a wicked one?

MAN

But if she's good—

PIERROT (*hopelessly*)

Ah, that's the trouble. She's good. A man can't live on goodness alone. It gets on his nerves.

MAN

And what else should he live on?

PIERROT (*passionately*)

Thrills—passions—longings! The kisses that make dreams—the touches of hands that make the songs come tumbling out of you—

MAN (*laughing*)

Oho, but it ought to be easy enough for a handsome young master like you to get those things!

PIERROT

It'd break her heart.

MAN (*lifting his eyes*)

Then you're fond of her, sir?

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERROT (*roughly*)

Of course I'm fond of her. That's just the trouble! (*pause*) But I'm tired to death of her—and that's the trouble, too. First, when I loved her, just a peep of her out of a window would set my heart dancing. Now, when I see her—it's just like seeing—the butcher boy—or the bakeshop woman. (*Rises excitedly*) I tell you when things are like that, something's got to be done. An artist can't live that way. Ordinary men can. All they want of their wives is to be cushions—soft—so's they can go to sleep. Artists are different. They want the sky and all the quivering stars in the sky. When they marry (*he makes a grimace*)—it's good-bye to the stars!

MAN (*looking at him quizzically*)

Did you ever think, sir, why the night was made—with them stars you talk of?

PIERROT

Why was the night made?

MAN

Or why there's settin' o' the sun and risin' o' the sun?

PIERROT

Why is there setting of the sun and rising of the sun?

MAN

Well—I don't exactly know myself. But I seem to figger it out this way. Think of what

HEARTS TO MEND

it'd be, I says to myself, if there was all just one long day. Always day and day and day. Always the same glary light starin' y' in the eye—borin' into your brain—so's y' couldn't shut it out from y'; so's y' couldn't get away from it; so's y' couldn't watch the shadders come stealin' along, the sun a-settin' and the twinklin' stars a-comin' out—and so's y' couldn't stretch yourself out and sleep—and so's y' couldn't all of a sudden wake and hear the birds chirpin' and a *new* day come! Ah, it's that, sir—it's the comin' of the new day that makes life the grand thing it is—the comin' of the new day *every* day!

PIERROT (*wonderingly*)

The coming of the new day every day?

MAN

Just that. It's a grand plan, sir! Keeps the world young. You try it.

PIERROT

Try it? What do you mean? I'm not the sun.

MAN

Ah, but you can be—and starlight and moonlight! How long was it—now tell me—since the thought came to you in the morning—I'll bring her—I'll bring her a vi'let? Oho—I know—(*sings*)

Sweet was the honeymoon,
Swift it passed away—
Now we're steady married folk—
Day after day.

HEARTS TO MEND

It's only for a short time—in the beginning—that every day's a new day. After that it's just always the same—always the same—and no risin' o' the sun in the mornin'—no chirp of birds—and no singin' in the heart.

PIERROT

You mean—

MAN (*roguishly, bending to his task*)

I mean there's a good way to mend kettles and a bad way, sir; and when the kettles are singin' and the fires are burnin' under them—Oho—but there's more hearts than kettles!

(*Pierrot stands thinking.*)

PIERROT (*to himself*)

I used to bring her things—a little red cloak I once brought her. Oh, she was happy! I remember that day. I made a song about it.

MAN (*hammering away—sings*)

Tins to mend,
And hearts to tend;
Hearts and tins
Have outs and ins!

PIERROT (*continuing—to himself*)

It was one of my very best songs. And she was so happy! (*Suddenly*) Why—I've forgotten all about her lately! Even her birthday! She had to remind me of it! Poor Pierrette!

HEARTS TO MEND

MAN (*sings*)

Outs and ins;
Outs and ins;
That's where the trouble
Of life begins!

(*Pierrot looks up. His eyes suddenly grow bright with an idea.*)

PIERROT (*rising to his toes—running to the Tins-to-Mend Man*)

I have it, old fellow—I have it! There's a shop—just a step away. I know something she wants there. I'm going to get it for her!

My purse it is lean;
My purse it is lank;
But who cares a flip
For the state of my bank!

(*He dances delighted.*)

Come—are you finished? I've got to hurry. She's gone off into that room to clear up. She'll be coming back any minute.

MAN (*looking up smiling—handing him the kettle*) It's mended. Better than it ever was!

(*Pierrot takes the kettle—runs to the shelf and puts it away. To the Man—*

PIERROT

Come now, come!

MAN (*gathering up pack*)

I'm coming. (*Sings*)—

HEARTS TO MEND

Life's a joy
When turned about;
In to in
And out to out.

PIERROT (*putting on cloak*)

If I hurry now, I'll have it here before she's through with her work; it's a beauty—it's a beauty (*dances exultant*).

My pockets are slimpsy as pockets can be;
And short is the space twixt the poorhouse and me;
But while there's a copper that hasn't been spent,
I'll mortgage my shoes for the price of the rent!

(*They both make their exit as Pierrot sings.*)

After a moment, Pierrette opens the inner door softly, and seeing that no one is there, steps in. She has on a cloak and a hood over her head. She is very sad.

She first takes the tea things from the table. Then, hesitating, she goes to the screen, pulling it softly aside. She leans over the crib for a merest moment. Then she pulls the screen to again, whispering:

Up in the sky are the firely stars;
Sleep, Kittikins, sleep!
Father will catch them in crystal jars—

PIERRETTE

Yes, Kittikins, we must let father. Father can make such beautiful songs. We must not stand in his way, Kittikins—we love him so.

HEARTS TO MEND

(She goes to the shelf and gets down a sheet of paper, the ink horn and a quill pen—takes them to the table, sits and writes.)

PIERRETTE

We'll just write this: "Mother Merle—will — take — Kittikins. — She — loves — her. — Good-bye—Sweetheart." We'll leave it here.

(She folds it and lays it on the table. She half goes once more to the crib; but she controls herself. Then, as she goes to the door, she half turns, looks at Pierrot's chair, and sings softly)—

Love comes in, a-tip-toe, laughing;
Love trails out with leaden feet—
Love that's here to-day may leave us,
Banished in a windy street.

I shall love you always, always—
Sweetheart, through the endless years;
I shall love you with my heartaches;
I shall love you with my tears.

(She goes out into the night.)

(After a time Pierrot comes hurrying in. His eyes are dancing. His toes are dancing. He peeks about to see if she is there. Then he makes to hide his package under the stool, but thinks better of it. He runs to the screen, but again decides against the place. He looks about and considers. An idea strikes him and he takes off his peaked hat and drops the package into that. But again he decides against it. At last, with a sudden inspiration, he runs to the pewter pot.)

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERROT (*gleeful*)

She'll use that to-night when she warms Kit-tikins' milk. A great idea! Oh, she'll be surprised! And I'll just pretend I know nothing about it! I'll be reading in my book—or writing—making faces at my paper—and I'll see her out of the corner of my eye—

Hi, hi—

Pierrette, hot!—

Peep behind

The pewter pot!

She'll take the pot away. She'll find the package! She'll open it! Then she'll just go all red and white—I can see her in my mind's eye—and she'll run over to me—

(He sees the paper on the table; reads it.)

PIERROT

Pierrette! (*He runs to the door of the inner room*) Pierrette! (*He runs to the street door*) Pierrette! (*Then he runs back for his hat; but just as he makes to follow her, the meaning of it comes over him. He drops his hat. He goes slowly to the table, dropping into his chair*) It's right. It's what ought to be. She was a wisp of sunlight—a night of stars—she was birds singing and summer winds. She was Pierrette!—(*With a sob*) And I drove her away!

(He sinks into the chair, his head on his arms. There is a pause. The door opens softly. Pierrette peeps in. Seeing Pierrot all crumpled

HEARTS TO MEND

up, she tiptoes toward him a few steps, stretching out her arms yearningly. But she controls herself, tiptoes a few steps towards the crib, blows a kiss to the baby and turns to go out again. Pierrot lifts his head suddenly, sees her and jumps up. Pierrette tries to escape him.)

PIERROT (*catching her in his arms*)

Pierrette!

PIERRETTE

Oh, Pierrot, I just came back for the littlest look. I couldn't help it. I'll go now.

PIERROT

But Pierrette, look! (*He dances about*) It's all come back again! I've got a new song singing in me, Pierrette! It's the best song yet. It'll make me famous!

The editors will flock to me,
Exactly as you said—
A-bringing gold and velvets
And a-swelling of my head!

(*He tries to take her cloak off.*)

PIERROT (*coaxingly*)

Pierrette, please stay!

PIERRETTE

No, no—it was *because* I went away, don't you see? That's how you found your song. You're right, Pierrot—wives *ought* to go away.

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERROT

But they ought to come back again, too,
Pierrette!

PIERRETTE

Only for a tiny look, Pierrot. They'd like—
oh yes, they'd like to stay. But if they're wise
—ah no—Good-bye!

(She starts to go. Pierrot runs after her.)

PIERROT

Pierrette—if you *must* go—wait—(*mysteri-
ously*)—there's something here for you.

PIERRETTE

Something for me?

PIERROT

Something for you.

PIERRETTE

Where is it?

PIERROT (*teasingly*)

Perhaps it's on the ceiling,
Perhaps it's on the floor;
Perhaps it's gone to visit the moon,
And won't be back till four!

PIERRETTE

Oh, Pierrot, don't tease! Where is it?

PIERROT (*more teasingly*)

Guess!

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERRETTE

Is it—is it—behind the screen?

PIERROT

Guess again.

PIERRETTE

Is it—is it—under the clock?

PIERROT

Guess again.

PIERRETTE

Is it—is it—under your hat?

PIERROT

Guess again.

PIERRETTE

Is it—is it—ah—I know where it is. It's behind the pewter pot!

PIERROT

Right!

(She runs up and gets the package, opens it and discovers a necklace of gay, red beads.)

PIERRETTE

Why—Pierrot—for me?

PIERROT *(making believe to consider)*

Well, that depends. I thought it was for you. But if you're going away—

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERRETTE

But why did you get it for me?

PIERROT

Do you want to know, sweetheart?

PIERRETTE

Yes.

PIERROT (*dances*)

Old Mister Pierrot
Went to a shop;
Then he came back again—
Hop—skip—hop!

PIERRETTE

But that isn't the *reason*, Pierrot. Be sensible.

PIERROT (*continues*)

Old Mister Pierrot
Was blue, blue, blue—
Along came a tinker-man
And showed him what to do!

PIERROT

Pierrette, I've come to a conclusion!

PIERRETTE (*apprehensively*)

Not *another* conclusion, Pierrot?

PIERROT

Yes. I'm great on conclusions. It's this: that most husbands, with adorable wives, are donkeys!

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERRETTE

Oh, but I knew that long ago—ever since I married you.

PIERROT

You knew it all that time?

PIERRETTE

Of course.

PIERROT

Then how were you able to put up with me?

PIERRETTE

Oh, I knew you'd discover it some day; and when you did discover it, you'd be such a *nice* donkey. Pierrot, I've come to a conclusion myself!

PIERROT (*apprehensively*)

You, too, Pierrette? What is it?

PIERRETTE

That most wives, with clever husbands, are silly geese!

PIERROT (*heartily*)

Why, I've known that, Pierrette, ever since I married *you*. I didn't think I ought to tell you, though.

PIERRETTE

And I don't blame you, Pierrot—not for a minute—for wanting me to go away.

HEARTS TO MEND

PIERROT (*fervently*)

I want you back, now!

PIERRETTE

But I *am* going away, Pierrot!

PIERROT

Pierrette!

PIERRETTE

Not now, Pierrot—but some time!

(As the curtain falls, they bend quickly toward each other, their hands stretched out behind, and kiss.)

Four Plays of the Free Theater:

"The Fossils," "The Serenade,"
"Francoise' Luck," "The Dupe."

Authorized Translation with Introduction by
BARRETT H. CLARK

The Contents of this Volume are:

Preface by———Brioux
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